

Multiple-Meaning Words

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

multiple-meaning words: words that can have more than one meaning

context: the surroundings or situation in which a word is used

context clues: other words or phrases near the word that help point to its meaning

HERE'S HOW

Step 1: Identify the part of speech. When you come across a multiple-meaning word and are unsure which definition to apply, ask: Is this word being used as a noun, verb, adjective, adverb, or some other part of speech?

Step 2: Think of definitions of the word that fit that part of speech. For example, if the word is being used as an adjective, you can rule out definitions that would only apply to a noun, verb, or adverb.

Step 3: Use context clues. Ask yourself: Which of the multiple meanings fits this context? If you are unsure, try each meaning in the sentence to see which makes the most sense.

Step 4: If none seem to fit, use a dictionary. Ask yourself: What else can this word mean? Remember to look only at definitions that fit the correct part of speech. Decide which one best fits the context.

EXAMPLE: CONTEXT CLUES

Read the following sentence, looking for clues to the meaning of the boldface word.

Chef Luc added a **cup** of crushed strawberries to the ice cream and stirred it vigorously before covering it and placing it in the freezer.

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
The article <i>an</i> before the adjective <i>extra</i> shows that in this sentence, <i>cup</i> is a noun.	The noun <i>cup</i> can mean all of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a drinking vessel • any item shaped like a drinking cup • a hole on a golf course • a trophy or prize 	In the sentence, Chef Luc is preparing food. None of the definitions I thought of seems to fit what he is doing.	The dictionary reminds me that a <i>cup</i> is: an exact 8-ounce measure in cooking. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The definition is the correct part of speech. • It fits the context.